

St George's Church of England (VA) Infant and Nursery School

Jackets Lane, Northam, Bideford, EX39 1HT

Inspection dates 15–16 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher is a calm, determined and inspirational leader. Together with the deputy headteacher, she provides a very clear and ambitious vision for the school.
- The experienced and highly committed governors provide strong support. They visit regularly and have a robust understanding of the school's performance.
- Senior and middle leaders share the high aspirations of the headteacher and carefully check and oversee pupils' progress. This has resulted in good achievement, especially in reading and mathematics.
- Children make a good start to their education in the early years. They achieve well and become confident learners. They are well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- The majority of parents are very happy with what the school provides. They feel that their children are taught well, make good progress and are kept very safe. Inspection findings support parents' views.
- Pupils' good progress is a result of good teaching. Staff work closely together and have good relationships with pupils. They have high expectations for pupils' work and behaviour.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well. British values are successfully conveyed through the exciting curriculum. This prepares pupils effectively for the next stage in their education and life in modern Britain.
- The provision for disabled children and those who have special educational needs is of a good quality. Parents are very appreciative of the way in which staff tenderly support children with complex needs.
- Pupils attend regularly and behave exceptionally well. They love learning and are very keen to do their best. They are very polite and treat each other with considerable friendliness and kindness.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' skills in writing are not always developed effectively, so standards are not as high as those seen in reading and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited all the classes and carried out one joint observation with the headteacher. They observed learning in 13 lessons, one assembly, and pupils' behaviour in the playground, during sports day and at lunchtimes.
- Discussions were held with pupils, three members of the governing body, the headteacher and other members of staff. A telephone discussion was also held with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors observed many aspects of the school's work, including support for pupils who need extra help. They heard pupils reading and examined pupils' work in their exercise books and on classroom and corridor wall displays.
- The inspectors looked at a number of documents, including plans for the school's future development, and records of the school's use of the primary sport funding and pupil premium funding. They also scrutinised the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe, pupils' attendance records and records of how the quality of teaching and learning is checked.
- The views of parents were taken into account through discussions with several parents. Inspectors also took note of 32 responses to the online Parent View survey and received letters from four parents.
- Staff views were taken into consideration by looking at questionnaires completed by 28 staff members.

Inspection team

Joyce Cox, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Judith Long

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St George's is a slightly above average-sized infant school. The Nursery has 70 part-time places for children aged between three and four. A small number of these children attend all day and most children attend part time.
- There are also two Reception classes in the early years provision and these children attend full time.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language is much lower than that found nationally.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average. These are pupils known to be eligible for additional support through the pupil premium. This is additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- An above average number of pupils have special educational needs.
- There have been several staff changes since the last inspection in 2010. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2011 and a new deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2013. Four new teachers, including a part time Reading Recovery teacher, were appointed from September 2012.
- In June 2013, the school became part of a cooperative trust working with seven other schools and a partner school.
- The school is federating with a local junior school in September 2015.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the teaching of writing in order to raise attainment further, by:
 - making sure pupils' writing targets are always written in easy to understand language so pupils are very clear how they can improve their work
 - ensuring teaching assistants are always deployed effectively so that they provide maximum support in all lessons
 - making sure less able children in Reception are always supported with their writing
 - improving some Year 2 pupils' handwriting in their literacy books.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The highly motivated and very capable headteacher shows a strong commitment to excellence. She works very closely with her enthusiastic and hard working deputy headteacher. Together, they have established a workforce who shares their vision and determination to create an outstanding school over time.
- Leaders have skilfully created an ethos where their aim is to 'provide children with the skills they need for life, a love of learning and the self-confidence to have aspirations for their future'. This permeates every aspect of the school's work. Senior leaders have taken robust action to eliminate weaker teaching to ensure that consistently good teaching and behaviour can flourish.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have successfully ensured that pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has risen year on year since the last inspection. However, pupils still do not make quite as much progress in writing as they do in reading and mathematics.
- Middle leaders check the quality and rate of pupils' learning. The headteacher and senior leaders ensure teaching is being developed and continues to improve. There are clear targets for members of staff and training is provided to help them in their roles and responsibilities.
- Finances are spent wisely, including the additional money allocated for the development of physical education. Teachers have been provided with extra training and new sports equipment has been purchased.
- A lunchtime play leader has been appointed to promote active lunchtimes and pupils who are less active are now skilfully encouraged to become fitter. Swimming provision now includes Year 2 pupils, with the result that a higher percentage of pupils are leaving the school being able to swim.
- The school provides equal opportunities and ensures that discrimination of any kind is actively discouraged. The special funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used effectively and is having a positive effect on their social and academic development. Individual support, particularly in reading, has accelerated pupils' progress so that these pupils are quickly catching up with their classmates.
- Pupils learn about democracy and British values through the decision making of the school council representatives. Pupils' views are always taken into account. For example, the council recently devised some interesting questions for some teachers who were applying to be a new Year 2 teacher at the school.
- The curriculum, which includes Year 2 Beach Club activities, is exciting and interesting and keeps pupils engaged and motivated in their learning. Numerous visits and visitors, such as a Maths Magician, excite and inspire pupils. The curriculum is also carefully and successfully planned to ensure pupils develop good reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong and lies at the heart of the school's work. Pupils learn about tolerance and respect and demonstrate these values in their outstanding behaviour. They happily raise lots of money for charity and also love supporting two children in a nursery in Kenya.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Leaders are vigilant in checking that all staff are fully trained in safety matters and are suitable to work with young children. Staff carry out careful risk assessments to help minimise accidents.
- The local authority considers the school to be low risk and hence only provides light touch support. It values the good practice the school is able to share with other local schools in the cooperative trust.
- The school has developed and maintained very good relationships with parents. Parental confidence in the school is high. One parent writes, 'I wouldn't want to send my child anywhere else. The staff go above and beyond to help each child with whatever they need.'
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. Governors are very knowledgeable about the school. They ask the leaders probing questions and provide a strong level of support and challenge.
 - Governors visit the school regularly to observe the school's work, consider strengths and contribute to identifying necessary improvements within the available financial budget. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and learning. They discuss staff salary awards and are aware of the checks made on the performance of staff members.
 - Governors are very clear about the pupils' achievement and how it compares with that in other schools locally and nationally. They have a good understanding of the positive way that the funding specifically for disadvantaged pupils is improving attainment and progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils love learning and are very proud of their work and achievements. Their delight in learning is one reason for their good progress.
- They say they enjoy all their lessons very much and highlight mathematics, art and history as being particularly favourite subjects. One Year 2 pupil told an inspector, 'I have received a very good education at St George's and am well prepared to move to the junior school.'
- Staff make very good use of 'learning animals' to enable young pupils to describe what kind of learner they are. For example, pupils say they love learning like a 'curious cat' or working together well like 'bees'.
- Pupils' consideration for others is impressive. Pupils demonstrate the school's vision and values through their behaviour, which is impeccable at all times. They understand why good behaviour and respect for others are very important.
- All staff have very high expectations for pupils' behaviour and manage it very well. School records show very few incidents of poor behaviour. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors said, 'There is no bullying in this school.'
- The school has highly effective ways to reward good behaviour and to deter poor behaviour. Pupils love to see their names in the 'Good to be green' charts, and very few pupils receive yellow or red warning cards.
- Almost all the parents who spoke to inspectors and who completed the questionnaire feel that behaviour is very good in the school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Staff supervise early years children and pupils very well. They check possible risks that pupils might face in different situations very thoroughly. Governors make sure that pupils are kept very safe at all times.
- Pupils learn to consider any potential dangers and say they feel very safe inside school and in the playground. They talked in great detail about keeping safe on the internet and explained the advice they had been given. They know what to do if they feel something is inappropriate or unkind.
- The school keeps a close eye on pupils' attendance, which is above average.
- Leaders and governors make sure that those who work with the pupils are rigorously checked. They make sure that all adults are trained regularly and know what to do in a medical emergency.
- Virtually all parents who offered an opinion thought that their children were safe and well looked after at the school. A parent of a child with additional needs writes, 'My child enjoys school and feels completely safe and well cared for. (It would be extremely hard for me to get him here every day if he did not.)'

The quality of teaching is good

- Good teaching and learning have led to above average results in Year 2 tests in reading and mathematics since the last inspection.
- Teachers have high expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour. They typically use probing questions to challenge pupils and expand their thinking.
- Many teaching assistants are dedicated and highly skilled and make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. However, there are a few occasions, such as when the teacher is talking to the whole class, when they do not engage sufficiently well with the pupils to extend their learning.
- The teaching of reading has always been one of the school's strengths. Pupils say they enjoy reading and use their phonic skills (linking letters to the sounds they make) well to work out new words. All classes have regular visits to the school library and pupils can talk about their favourite stories and authors such as Beatrix Potter and David McKee.
- Mathematics is taught well. Pupils use their mathematical skills to solve problems that challenge them and make them think. For example, Year 1 pupils demonstrated superb thinking and reasoning skills when they were challenged to think of several ways to fold a rectangular piece of paper into quarters.
- Senior leaders and all staff have worked very hard to raise pupils' attainment and achievement in writing. Consequently, standards are rising steadily. However, a scrutiny of pupils' writing books revealed that, on a few occasions, pupils' writing targets are written in complex language which makes it hard for pupils to know how to improve their writing.
- In addition, a small number of Year 2 pupils have difficulties forming their letters correctly.
- Teachers know their subjects well and teach with enthusiasm and passion. Mutual trust and respect

between staff and pupils nurture pupils' excellent attitudes to learning.

- Virtually all parents who responded to the online questionnaire or who spoke to inspectors thought their children were taught well.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment is above average overall by the end of Year 2, although it is higher in reading and mathematics than in writing. Attainment in the current Year 2 is on track to be higher than in previous years.
- Pupils make good progress from their starting points. In reading, they develop a love of books and score higher than other Year 1 pupils in their annual phonic screening check.
- Writing, and in particular boys' writing, has been a whole-school focus over the last year and pupils are encouraged to write in all subjects. Pupils' attainment in writing is rising steadily year on year.
- In mathematics, pupils make good progress in learning mathematical skills and are learning to apply these skills to solve problems.
- The most able pupils achieve well as they given harder work to make them really think.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress overall because they are supported well in most lessons. Targeted programmes led by highly trained staff are successful in encouraging reluctant readers to enjoy and learn new words.
- The gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils at the school and nationally are closing in reading, writing and mathematics. Most of these pupils are making at least as much, if not more, progress as other pupils in the school.

The early years provision is good

- Most children start in the Nursery with skills that are typically below those expected for their age, particularly in their speech and language development.
- Children make good progress and achieve well in both the Nursery and Reception classes. There are clear activities in the classrooms and outdoor areas to encourage children to practise their early reading and writing skills. For example, in one lesson, the most able Reception children made outstanding progress and had great fun when composing sentences, such as 'super starfish sparkling in the sea'.
- In this lesson, a teaching assistant effectively supported weaker learners to complete their writing activities. However, in another lesson, less able children were not supported in their writing - and their progress was restricted as the activity was too hard for them.
- Children's attainment is higher this year than last year and most children in the current Reception year are now working at the levels typical for their age in all the areas of learning. Boys' attainment in reading and writing, which was low in 2014, is higher this year. Consequently, children are well prepared for their Year 1 classes.
- Teaching is good because staff work together well to provide interesting activities. Adults are particularly good play partners and know precisely when to intervene to extend children's language, learning and play. They make sure that new vocabulary is introduced and defined.
- Children behave very well and are kept very safe. They have good attitudes to learning and play together sensibly. They show respect for each other's needs and feelings and share resources fairly.
- Leadership and management are good. The experienced leader knows how young children learn best and she ensures that teaching and learning continue to improve. Leadership has been particularly effective this year in developing and improving boys' writing.
- Parents are very appreciative of the early years staff's endless patience, hard work and kindness. One parent, whose child has just completed a year in Nursery, writes, 'From being a slightly shy three year old my child has developed into a happy, confident and capable four-year-old. Gentle encouragement by the Nursery team has enabled my child to complete activities such as name writing, counting, sounding out words, playing and sharing well.'

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	113456
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	449592

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	239
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheila Bloomfield
Headteacher	Tricia Palk
Date of previous school inspection	18–19 March 2010
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